

MANCHESTER CULTURE BACKGROUNDER

Over the last 25 years Manchester has been transformed from a struggling post-industrial city with a declining population to the UK's fastest-growing city playing a confident role on the international stage.

City leaders have long recognised the powerful role that culture can play in regeneration and place-making, creating jobs and other opportunities, and adding to the mix of what makes Manchester a place where people and business want to be.

When Time Out magazine named Manchester last year as the third best city in the world to visit – well ahead of the next placed UK city, London, which was 13th – culture was cited as a major factor.

Other recent top accolades include:

- National Geographic – Best of the World 2023
- Lonely Planet – Best in Travel 2023
- Time Out – 23 Best things to do in the world 2023
- Conde Nast Traveller – 13 Best Places to go in the UK for 2023
- The Guardian – 23 Great travel ideas for 2023

The city's reputation might be founded on its industrial past, but at the same time Manchester has long been a place of learning and the arts.

This parallel reputation as a centre of culture and creativity began to gather pace following the 2002 Commonwealth Games, when the eyes of the world were on the city.

Since then, the city's creative sector has continued to grow and thrive, and just months before the pandemic struck, Manchester was recognised by the CBI* as the second largest creative city in Europe after London, with a GVA to the city's economy of £1.4bn – proving the soundness of the city's ongoing investment in culture and the arts, and its continuing belief in the power of culture and creativity to transform lives. *('Centre Stage' report Oct 2019)

Major cultural projects in Manchester over the last 25+ years include:

Bridgewater Hall opened in 1996 to great acclaim - a world leading concert hall for the city with use of innovative acoustic technology making it one of the best places in the world to enjoy music. Made possible with a £42million package of investment split equally between Manchester City Council, Central Manchester Development Corporation and the European Regional Development Fund. The Hall is the home of the Hallé Orchestra, the city's orchestra since 1858.

The Hallé opened their own venue, **Hallé St Peter's**, incorporating the refurbished St. Peter's Church and the recently constructed Oglesby Centre, in 2019 in Ancoats. While the Bridgewater Hall still hosts their symphonic-scale concerts, Hallé St Peter's is home to the Hallé extensive learning and engagement activities, their youth ensembles and chamber music series, as well as a café.

In 2002, **Manchester Art Gallery** reopened to the public following the creation of a new contemporary extension to the rear of the classical building. The £35m investment created a stunning side new entrance and atrium space with lift access to all galleries. The project tripled the gallery in size and the exhibition gallery spaces were doubled.

People's History Museum, the national museum of democracy reopened in 2010 after a £12.5 million capital scheme to combine the restored historic Pump House building with a magnificent contemporary extension. The People's History Museum invites visitors to discover over 200 years of ideas worth fighting for across two permanent galleries, a state-of-the-art conservation studio, a changing exhibition gallery, archive and study centre and extensive learning and community spaces.

Thanks to a £50m investment, **Manchester Central Library** was magnificently refurbished and redeveloped as part of the wider Civic Quarter investment. Completed in 2014, the development dramatically changed the amount of the building accessible to the public and included the restoration of the historic reading room. In 2019/20 the library was officially named the busiest public library in the UK, smashing all estimates by recording more than two million visits that year.

The Whitworth reopened in 2015 following a £15m transformation of the gallery and was named 2015 Museum of the Year. The redevelopment doubled public space and created state-of-the-art new facilities including expanded gallery spaces, a study centre, learning studio, and a collections centre. The highly acclaimed redevelopment gave new life to the Whitworth's eclectic and extensive collection of historical and contemporary fine art, textiles and wallpapers and its ambitious exhibition programme.

HOME is Manchester's state of the art centre for contemporary theatre, film, art, music. Opening in 2015 in its new iconic First Street location at a cost of £25m, HOME brought together the former Library Theatre Company and the popular Cornerhouse art and cinema complex into a new stunning and purpose-built venue with some of the best environmental credentials in the city. It has two theatres and flexible studio space, five cinemas, gallery space to display contemporary art, a café bar and restaurant.

Contact, based on Oxford Road, is one of the city's most innovative cultural organisations. It reopened its doors in 2021 following a transformative £6m refurbishment project, creating new and improved venues spaces to work with the city's newest and emerging creatives. It specialises in producing work with young people aged 13 to 30 and is recognised nationally and internationally as a pioneer in the field of youth leadership and creativity.

National Football Museum opened its doors in 2012 in the architecturally iconic Urbis building which was adapted to house the museum and its globally significant artefacts and exhibits, including the prestigious FIFA collection. The stunning glass structure became a symbol of the city's recovery following the IRA Bomb in 1996. Adaptations to the building prior to the museum opening in 2012 totalled £7.6million, funded equally between ERDF and Manchester City Council.

Manchester Jewish Museum reopened in July 2021 after a capital scheme which saw the old museum, the Sephardi synagogue on Cheetham Hill Road, refurbished and a new extension built. The £6m refurbishment, supported by the National Heritage Lottery Fund has won several architectural awards (British Construction Industry Awards 2021: Cultural and Leisure Project of the Year and Best Small Project).

Band on the Wall, a cornerstone in Manchester's live music scene reopened in 2022 after work to extend the venue into a neighbouring historic property - increasing the venue's capacity to welcome larger audiences to its characteristically diverse music programme.

Manchester Museum reopened in February 2023 following its £15million hello future transformation, dedicated to creating an inclusive, imaginative, and caring museum, and taking a stance on dealing with its legacy of Empire. The redevelopment includes a South Asia Gallery (a British Museum partnership), the UK's first co-created with and celebrating the lived experiences of South Asian diaspora communities; the Lee Kai Hung Chinese Culture Gallery capturing personal stories of Manchester-China empathy and friendship; and an Exhibition Hall hosting the international touring show, Golden Mummies of Egypt. A new entrance, accessible visitor facilities, prayer room and picnic area emphasise Manchester Museum as a place of belonging for everyone.

The world-renowned **Manchester International Festival** launched in 2007 as the world's first festival of original new commissions. Working collaboratively with artists, musicians, theatre makers and writers, from around the world as well as local people, the city-wide festival takes place every two years.

The city has also forged many international cultural links over the last 25 years, including:

MANCCC (Manchester Network with Cultural Collaboration with China) - A network of cultural and higher education organisations established in 2019 who work with China, harnessing the power of culture and creativity to support Manchester and Greater Manchester's relationships with Chinese cities, e.g., through artist exchanges. This work is supported by the British Council.

Danish Cities collaboration - In 2019, the cities of Aarhus, Aalborg and Manchester signed a Memorandum of Understanding on cultural collaboration, establishing a framework between the cities for collaboration on arts and culture, and focusing on arts and health, children and young people, and urban development and design as priority areas. This work is supported by the Danish Agency for Culture and Palaces and Arts Council England.

Manchester City of Literature - A charity set up following Manchester's successful bid for the UNESCO City of Literature designation in 2017 when the city joined an international network of UNESCO Creative Cities, 38 of them Cities of Literature. Its vision is to create an innovative, distinctive, equitable, globally connected city of reading and writing and to help ensure Manchester is a city where diverse voices are celebrated, creative talent and industries are nurtured, and where literary activity changes lives. The charity is supported by Manchester City Council, University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University.

Music Cities Network - In July 2019, Manchester joined the international Music Cities Network, a collaboration of global music cities which collaborate on the development of their music sectors, share experience, and arrange joint initiatives. The network includes Aarhus in Denmark, Bergen in Norway, Berlin in Germany, Groningen in the Netherlands, Nantes in France, Hamburg in Germany, Sydney in Australia, and Reykjavik in Iceland.

Manchester also maintains and fosters cultural links with its partner cities Wuhan in China, and Chemnitz in Germany as well as other cities across the world.

In recognition of the importance of culture to Manchester the city also holds the annual **Manchester Culture Awards**. Held for the first time in 2018, the annual awards recognise the breadth and impact of the cultural life of the city; from individual young artists and grassroots-led innovative community arts organisations, through to leading cultural institutions.

Looking ahead, Manchester's influence on culture and creativity has resulted in it being chosen by **Chanel** as the place where its next **Métiers d'Art** show – a celebration of the savoir-faire of Chanel's métiers d'art - will be unveiled this December, following on from last year's show in Dakar and previous shows around the world.

Manchester will also play host to the 30th anniversary edition of the prestigious **WOMEX** international music convention next year on behalf of the UK and Ireland in October 2024, which is expected to bring over 2,600 international delegates and musicians into the city and to have a significant impact locally and nationally.